

been cut. This extensive "wildland" is very important habitat for a great array of animal species. It is assumed that larger animals such as the bobcat (*Felis rufus*) and gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) are found in this area, as well as elsewhere in the county. The floodplain provides some of the best habitat for breeding birds in North Carolina. Large numbers of warblers, including the Watch List Swainson's warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*) and the uncommon Kentucky warbler (*Oporornis formosus*), nest in the floodplain. Game species such as wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) and white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) are often seen or heard in these bottomland forests.

The county has a large number of both man-made lakes and ponds, as well as naturally-created beaver ponds. These areas of open water provide habitat for frogs, turtles, waterfowl, and other wildlife. Several great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*) colonies are present in the county. The Buckhorn Reservoir, enlarged by the City of Wilson in 1999, not only provides nesting and foraging habitat for the bald eagle but provides foraging habitat for wading birds and shorebirds in summer and fall, when mudflats are exposed. Notable birds seen during the inventory that might nest at these lakes and ponds include the osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) and the anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*).

Though several hurricanes (Fran in 1996 and Dennis and Floyd in 1999) have recently impacted the rivers and creeks in the county, these flowing bodies of water are very important habitats for animals. More than half of the rare species in the county are found in the Little River, the Neuse River, and in their larger tributaries. Though the current condition of most of these populations is not known, as no aquatic surveys were conducted for this inventory, it is assumed that the majority of the rare species are still present. The Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission is planning surveys of many of the rivers and streams of the county in 2001-2002.